



Smart Growth Implementation Assistance 2011 Request for Letters of Interest (RFLI)

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE: Approximately \$75,000 per recipient in contractor support
COMMUNITIES SELECTED THIS YEAR: 3 to 4

OVERVIEW

The Office of Sustainable Communities in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Policy is seeking letters of interest from states, regions, and communities that want to develop in ways that protect the environment, use resources efficiently, create economic opportunities, and provide a high quality of life. The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) program provides assistance from national experts to help communities explore barriers to smart growth implementation and pilot innovative ideas that create more sustainable communities. EPA will provide technical assistance to successful applicants as described below. Eligible entities are tribal, local, regional, and state governments and nonprofit organizations that have a demonstrated partnership with a governmental entity.

EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities offers a variety of technical assistance that ranges from longer-term, in-depth assistance to more streamlined assistance for common development challenges. Two technical assistance programs, SGIA and Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities, have open calls for letters of interest at the same time. Applicants should determine which technical assistance program is right for their community. The SGIA program focuses on complex or cutting-edge issues, and projects can take about 18 months. These projects explore innovative ideas to overcome barriers that are preventing communities from getting the kind of development they want. At the other end of the spectrum is the Building Blocks program, which provides quick, targeted technical assistance to communities using a variety of tools that have demonstrated results and widespread application. The Building Blocks program has a separate application process, which can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/buildingblocks.htm>. For a complete list of the types of technical assistance provided by the Office of Sustainable Communities, please visit http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sg_implementation.htm.

Over the last five years of the SGIA program, the Office of Sustainable Communities has worked with a diverse array of communities from across the country on issues such as stormwater management, code revision, transit-oriented development, affordable housing, infill development, corridor planning, green building, and climate change. In 2009, through the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, EPA began involving HUD and DOT in the assistance provided to the selected communities. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is a collaboration among EPA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to protect the environment, promote equitable development, and help address the challenges of climate change.¹ HUD and DOT will serve on

¹ More on the Partnership for Sustainable Communities: <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>

the technical assistance teams, bringing relevant resources from their agencies, and will help identify how SGIA projects can complement and build on past and future federal investments.

Communities selected for the SGIA program will receive assistance in the form of a multi-day visit by a team of experts organized by EPA to work with local leaders. Staff from EPA, HUD, and DOT will participate in these site visits. EPA will provide this assistance through an Agency contract, **not a grant**. Communities will not receive any funding directly; the assistance is entirely in the form of work from contractors paid by EPA. Team members will be experts in disciplines to be determined by the community's unique needs. Typically the teams include some combination of planners, urban designers, economists, landscape architects, engineers, and other experts. The contractor team will work with the applicant to study the context and the specific project and meet with elected officials, business leaders, citizen organizations, and other stakeholders. Upon completion, the applicant will receive a final report that discusses the challenge with which the community requested assistance; the goals and desires of community leaders, residents, businesses, and other stakeholders as gathered in the team's site visit; specific options the community could consider to address the challenge; and additional resources. Since one goal of the SGIA program is to develop replicable models from which other communities, states, regions, or tribes can learn, EPA may use the final product as the basis for other, more general publications intended for a national audience.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE OPPORTUNITY

Communities and states around the country are interested in fostering economic growth, protecting their environmental and cultural resources, enhancing public health, extending the benefits of community redevelopment to all citizens equitably, and planning for development, but they may lack the tools, resources, or information to achieve these goals. In response to these needs, EPA, with the assistance of HUD and DOT, is offering direct technical assistance from national experts to communities, tribes, regions, and states that want to incorporate smart growth techniques in their development. EPA is also interested in identifying and documenting innovative solutions to complex problems faced by communities as they seek to incorporate smart growth practices. The findings from SGIA projects inform EPA's own policy practice. As such, they serve as evidence of cutting-edge challenges, examples of leadership in smart growth, and solutions that can be disseminated and replicated across the country.

For more information about previous SGIA projects, see www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia_communities.htm.

EPA is soliciting letters of interest from tribal, local, regional, and state governments and nonprofit organizations that have a demonstrated partnership with a governmental entity. The requested assistance can incorporate policy analysis and review, planning and visioning processes, development and assessment of scorecards or ranking criteria, or other work that addresses the applicant's specific challenge. The type of work, however, should enable the community to better implement smart growth development practices.

Applicants are asked to propose development challenges or cutting-edge issues they would like to address through assistance from the SGIA program. EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities has identified some issues that are of greater interest for this round of SGIA, and those issues are listed in the "Preparing the Letter of Interest" section.

Based on the written proposals and possible subsequent phone calls with applicants, EPA, HUD, and DOT staff will choose up to four communities, tribes, regions, states, or nonprofits to receive technical assistance.

PREPARING THE LETTER OF INTEREST

EPA, HUD, and DOT will evaluate letters of interest based on the criteria listed below. Letters should be no more than 4 pages. Supplemental materials such as maps and site plans can also be submitted, but not to exceed 4 pages. The total application should be no more than 8 pages. This application will serve as an initial screen of projects. A small number of applicants will then be asked to participate in a follow-up phone call with the interagency review team, which will then choose up to four applicants to work with.

Letters of interest must include the following:

1. Project Contact. List the name, title, phone, email, and address of the person who will be the main project contact. This person will be responsible for working with EPA staff to answer questions and provide additional information as the application process progresses. This person should have a comprehensive understanding of the content and work of the assistance.

2. Description of the Smart Growth Challenge. Applicants need to articulate the smart growth challenge or policy issue. A list of the topics in which EPA is most interested is below, including some examples of potential types of projects. Please provide a focused description of a single, specific challenge that falls into one of these categories. Reviewers will consider compelling cases of smart growth challenges that do not fall into one of these categories.

1. Community Resilience to Disasters and Climate Change
 - Adaptation planning for heat island, drought, wildfires, and water supply impacts, which can be hard to plan for because of political considerations and because communities lack tools to make decisions based on projected near- and long-term risk to buildings, infrastructure, and natural areas.
 - Developing post-disaster plans that anticipate opportunities after disasters occur to relocate and rebuild in safe places. Examples of such disasters include those listed above and others such as floods.
2. Community Energy Planning
 - Using development patterns and land use approaches to make energy more affordable and easier to implement at the district or neighborhood level, including:
 - Zoning, site configuration, and street design challenges for implementing district energy systems.
 - Codes and other strategies for solar, wind, and other locally generated renewable energy sources.
 - Partnerships with utilities to introduce district energy areas within the larger grid.
3. Smart Growth in Tribal Communities
 - Land use planning to better guide and link federal investments that support tribal communities, including EPA, HUD, DOT, and USDA Rural Development investments for housing, transportation, and water and wastewater infrastructure.

- Energy sovereignty and independence, including renewable energy generation on tribal lands.
 - Emerging economic development opportunities on tribal lands, including land use planning for industry, such as agricultural and renewable energy, as well as tourism and recreation.
 - Development and implementation of culturally appropriate codes and standards for sustainable community design.
4. Land Use Strategies for Economic Development Agencies
- Using smart growth approaches to meet economic development goals at the state and regional level.
 - Local diversification of jobs and tax base with mixed-use, compact development and varied housing types.
5. Economic Viability of Small Towns and Rural Communities
- Attracting economic growth in slow-growing rural communities while ensuring a sustainable built environment.
 - Implementation of land use strategies that enhance the economic value of rural landscapes and protect rural livelihoods.
 - Implementation of land use strategies that promote urban-rural links to bring rural products (such as farm or forest products) to urban markets.

If you are requesting assistance with a policy issue, consider how that policy challenge is manifested in a geographical area of your community or how a solution to the challenge could be applied in a specific place. The project area could be a neighborhood within a community, a region within a state, or some other geographically defined area that reflects the challenge or issue in question. The project area should be chosen based on the need of the area and the potential for implementation of the policies or designs created through this assistance. Include demographic information that supports why this area is targeted and the benefits to the community. What are the key challenges facing residents and users of this space? Why does this challenge exist? How has it been addressed in the past (if at all), and what do you hope to accomplish by addressing this challenge? Please be sure to describe a project area as it relates to the policy challenge. Area planning exercises are not the focus of the SGIA program.

3. Role of EPA-led Team. Provide a brief, specific description of the expected role of the EPA-led team. For instance, what will the national experts do—will they hold a workshop, conduct research, analyze data, etc.? How will the team’s involvement help resolve the challenge? What value would the team add that your community cannot provide on its own? Clearly demonstrating your ideas here will provide our team with a sense of what value we might add and how you see the project progressing.

4. Potential Impact of the Project. Describe how the anticipated results of the project will help your community. The proposal should include realistic, achievable goals for project implementation following the completion of the technical assistance. Understandably, the expected results may not be known, but successful projects will have some sense of how this investment will benefit the community and build support for future economically and environmentally sustainable growth. In addition, EPA wants to find projects that have replicable outcomes. Does this project have the potential to provide lessons learned or transferable results that could be applied elsewhere in the state, region, or country?

5. Political and Public Support. Applicants need to identify persons and/or organizations that support the project and will work toward its implementation. For instance, applicants need to address whether this project is a priority to the mayor, tribal council, or elected officials. Who is championing this work, and who will find the resources to ensure that it is part of efforts to implement smart growth strategies? Please include a list of references (full letters of support are welcome, but not necessary) for each of the following:

- Political Support: can include mayors, city or tribal council members, representatives from governor's office or state general assembly, or other elected officials.
- Public or Community Support: can include neighborhood coalitions, community development groups, local business organizations, and other similar citizens' organizations.

Letters of interest will be evaluated based on how well the proposed project describes the challenge, potential impact, and political and public support. A small group of applicants will be asked to participate in a follow-up phone interview with EPA and its federal partners. These calls will further evaluate how well the applicant meets the criteria. EPA will make final selections by the end of December 2011.

Letters of interest must be submitted via email to [Abby Hall](mailto:hall.abby@epa.gov) (hall.abby@epa.gov) no later than October 28, 2011, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time. If you have questions about this solicitation, please contact [Abby Hall](mailto:hall.abby@epa.gov) (hall.abby@epa.gov, 202-566-2086) or see the frequently asked questions for SGIA: http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia_faq.htm.